

Protect against rabies

NEWSMA

Rabies can be one of the most devastating illnesses for both animals and humans. A zoonotic disease that is typically transferred from infected wildlife to humans and animals by a virus, rabies infects victims' central nervous systems, attacking the brain and leading to death. Rabies is preventable with a vaccination, but difficult to treat once a person or animal has been infected.

One of the most important things that you, as a pet owner, can do for your animal is to protect them against rabies. A primary concern of yours should be getting your pet its rabies vaccination and keeping up to date with subsequent booster shots. In North Carolina, law requires that beginning at four months, dogs, cats and ferrets must receive their rabies shot or face a six-month quarantine or euthanasia.

Getting this treatment is one of the best ways you can take care of your pet, and you should give it high priority. In addition to giving your animal proper medical preventative care, you can take a few other steps that will help keep your pet safe. If possible, fence your yard and supervise your pet whenever it is outside.

Although invisible, undetected fences may seem like a good option for keeping your pet safe, they are not as helpful as real fences, since rabid animals are still able to enter your yard and your pet will be unable to get away from an intruder. A traditional fence is the most secure way to help you keep your pet safe from wild animals



that could be carrying rabies. Feed your pet inside your house. Keeping your pet's food outdoors will attract other animals, which can endanger both you and your pet. Remember that even birdfeeders can attract unwanted critters, like foxes or squirrels that might be infected.

If you do encounter wildlife, even orphan wildlife that looks like it needs care, call animal control and do not handle the animals yourself. Do not feed or try to help them, especially if they look or are acting strange. If possible, contain any animal on your property or in your home without touching it so that animal control can test it for rabies. Always call animal control if you encounter a bat in or around your home, since bats can be carriers of the disease. Bat bites in particular can be difficult to detect, and if you have any suspicion that you have been bitten, it is important to have the animal tested since you will need to know whether to get treated yourself.

chimneys and screen attic vents to prevent them from entering. Pay special attention if you are building or remodeling your home, since animals can easily enter your house through construction sites. Keep the area around your home clean and secure any garbage, since it will attract wild animals.

If you or your pets do get bitten by an animal that is infected, or even get a rabid animal's saliva on an open wound or scratch, or uncous membrane, wash the area for 15 minutes with soap and clean, running water. Call your doctor or veterinarian immediately and get treatment, so the consequences are not fatal.

According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, in 2012, there have been 341 reported cases of rabies in North Carolina, primarily among wild animals, and the state has not reported a case of rabies in a human since 1955 because of strong public health and animal control efforts. While this disease can be devastating, it is can be controlled in domestic animals and humans when animal owners take the necessary steps to prevent harm and the spread of rabies. For information about getting your pet their rabies shot, contact your veterinarian or the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association.

The North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association (NCVMA) is a professional organization of veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit www.ncvma.org.

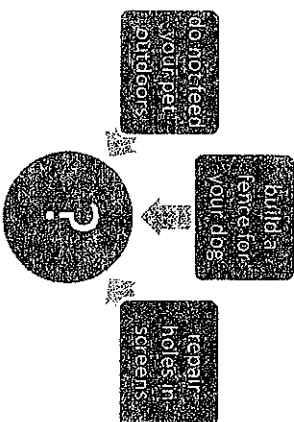
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CCSS: reading informational texts

Vocabulary support:

- *Zoonotic* – disease that can be passed from animals to people
- *Euthanasia* – the humane act that kills a living organism
- *Quarantine* – setting aside, putting in a contained place to stop the spread of disease

1. Which category best describes the graphic organizer below?



4. Why does the writer suggest pets be fed inside their homes?
- A to attract birds to home feeders
B to stop foxes from eating the food
C to keep the pet's food clean and fresh
D to discourage wild animals away from the home
5. Which word best describes a pet owner's best plan regarding rabies?
- A carelessness
B fear
C prevention
D worry

- A zoonotic fears
B why fences are good
C how to feed a pet
D ways to avoid rabies

2. What is a booster shot?

- A one that prevents fleas
B one given only one time
C one given high on the hip
D one that follows the first shot

3. Which animal can carry rabies?

- A bat
B butterfly
C earthworm
D wasp

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